SALMAGUNDI;

OR, THE

WHIM-WHAMS AND OPINIONS

OF

LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

AND OTHERS.

In hoc est hoax, cum quiz et jokesez,
Et smokem, toastem, roastem folksez,
Fee, faw, fum. *Psalmanazar.*

With baked, and broiled, and stewed, and toasted,
And fried, and boiled, and smoked, and roasted,
We treat the town.

NO. 15] *Thursday, Oct.* 1, 1807. [NO. 5 OF VOL. 2.

SKETCHES FROM NATURE.

BY ANTHONY EVERGREEN, GENT.

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The brisk north-westers which prevailed not long since, had a powerful effect in arresting the progress of belles, beaux and wild-pigeons, in their fashionable northern tour, and turning them back to the more balmy region of the south. Among the rest I was encountered, full butt, by a blast, which set my teeth chattering, just as I doubled one of the frowning bluffs of the Mohawk mountains, in my route to Niagara, and facing about incontinently, I forthwith scud before the wind, and a few days since arrived at my old quarters in New-York. My first care on returning from so long an absence, was to visit the worthy family of the Cocklofts, whom I found safe burrowed in their country mansion. On inquiring for my highly respected coadjutor, Langstaff, I learned with

great concern that he had relapsed into one of his eccentrick fits of the spleen, ever since the era of a turtle dinner, given by old Cockloft to some of the neighbouring squires, wherein the old gentleman had achieved a glorious victory in laying honest Launcelot fairly under the table. Langstaff, although fond of the social board and cheerful glass, yet abominates any excess, and has an invincible aversion to *getting mellow*, considering it a wilful outrage on the sanctity of imperial *mind*, a senseless abuse of the body, and an unpardonable, because a voluntary, prostration of both mental and personal dignity. I have heard him moralize on the subject, in a style that would have done honour to Michael Cassio himself; but I believe, if the truth were known, this antipathy rather arises from his having, as the phrase is, but a weak head, and nerves so extremely sensitive, that he is sure to suffer severely from a frolick, and will groan and make resolutions against it for a week afterwards. He therefore took this waggish exploit of old Christopher's, and the consequent quizzing which he underwent, in high dudgeon, had kept aloof from company for a fortnight, and appeared to be meditating some deep plan of retaliation upon his mischievous old crony. He had, however, for the last day or two, shown some symptoms of convalescence; had listened, without more than half a dozen twitches of impatience, to one of Christopher's unconscionable long stories, and even was seen to smile, for the one hundred and thirtieth time, at a venerable joke, originally borrowed from Joe Miller; but which by dint of long occupancy, and frequent repetition,

the old gentleman now firmly believes happened to himself somewhere in New-England.

As I am well acquainted with Launcelot's haunts, I soon found him out. He was lolling on his favourite bench rudely constructed at the foot of an old tree, which is full of fantastical twists, and with its spreading branches forms a canopy of luxuriant foliage. This tree is a kind of chronicle of the short reigns of his uncle John's mistresses, and its trunk is sorely wounded with carvings of true lovers knots, hearts, darts, names, and inscriptions—frail memorials of the variety of fair dames who captivated the wandering fancy of that old cavalier in the days of his youthful romance. Launcelot holds this tree in particular regard, as he does every thing else connected with the memory of his good uncle John. He was reclining, in one of his usual brown studies, against its trunk, and gazing pensively upon the river that glided just by, washing the drooping branches of the dwarf willows that fringed its bank. My appearance roused him—he grasped my hand with his usual warmth, and with a tremulous but close pressure, which spoke that his heart entered into the salutation. After a number of affectionate inquiries and felicitations, such as friendship, not form, dictated, he seemed to relapse into his former flow of thought, and to resume the chain of ideas my appearance had broken for a moment.

"I was reflecting" said he, "my dear Anthony, upon some observations I made in our last number, and considering whether the sight of objects once dear to the affections, or of scenes where we have passed different happy periods of early life, really occasions most enjoyment or most regret.

Renewing our acquaintance with well-known but long separated objects, revives, it is true, the recollection of former pleasures and touches the tenderest feelings of the heart, like the flavour of a delicious beverage will remain upon the palate long after the cup has parted from the lips. But on the other hand, my friend, these same objects are too apt to awaken us to a keener recollection of what *we were*, when they erst delighted us, and to provoke a mortifying and melancholy contrast with what we are at present. They act in a manner as milestones of existence, showing us how far we have travelled in the journey of life—how much of our weary but fascinating pilgrimage is accomplished. I look round me, and my eye fondly recognizes the fields I once sported over, the river in which I once swam, and the orchard I intrepidly robbed in the halcyon days of boyhood. The fields are still green, the river still rolls unaltered and undiminished, and the orchard is still flourishing and fruitful—it is I only am changed. The thoughtless flow of mad-cap spirits that nothing could depress—the elasticity of nerve that enabled me to bound over the field, to stem the stream, and climb the tree—the "sunshine of the breast" that beamed an illusive charm over every object, and created a paradise around me——where are they?—The thievish lapse of years has stolen them away, and left in return nothing but grey hairs, and a repining spirit." My friend Launcelot concluded his harangue with a sigh, and as I saw he was still under the influence of a whole legion of the *blues*, and just on the point of sinking into one of his whimsical, and unreasonable fits of melancholy abstraction, I proposed a walk—he

consented, and slipping his left arm in mine, and waving in the other a gold-headed thorn cane, bequeathed him by his uncle John, we slowly rambled along the margin of the river.

Langstaff, though possessing great vivacity of temper, is most woefully subject to these "thick coming fancies;" and I do not know a man whose animal spirits do insult him with more jiltings, and coquetries, and slippery tricks. In these moods he is often visited by a whim-wham which he indulges in common with the Cocklofts. It is that of looking back with regret, conjuring up the phantoms of good old times, and decking them out in imaginary finery, with the spoils of his fancy, like a good lady widow, regretting the loss of the "poor dear man," for whom, while living, she cared not a rush. I have seen him and Pindar, and old Cockloft, amuse themselves over a bottle with their youthful days, until by the time they had become what is termed *merry*, they were the most miserable beings in existence. In a similar humour was Launcelot at present, and I knew the only way was to let him moralize himself out of it.

Our ramble was soon interrupted by the appearance of a personage of no little importance at Cockloft-hall—for, to let my readers into a family secret, friend Christopher is notoriously hen-pecked by an old negro, who has *whitened* on the place, and is his master's almanack and counsellor. My readers, if haply they have sojourned in the country and become conversant in rural manners, must have observed, that there is scarce a little hamlet but has one of these old weather-beaten wiseacres of negroes, who ranks among the great characters of the place. He is always resorted to as an oracle to re-

solve any question about the weather, fishing, shooting, farming and horse-doctoring; and on such occasions will slouch his remnant of a hat on one side, fold his arms, roll his white eyes and examine the sky, with a look as knowing as Peter Pindar's magpie, when peeping into a marrow-bone. Such a sage curmudgeon is *Old Cæsar*, who acts as friend Cockloft's prime minister, or grand vizier, assumes, when abroad, his master's style and title, to wit, *Squire Cockloft*, and is, in effect, absolute lord and ruler of the soil.

As he passed us, he pulled off his hat, with an air of something more than respect,—it partook, I thought, of affection. "There, now, is another memento of the kind I have been noticing," said Launcelot; "Cæsar was a bosom friend and chosen playmate of cousin Pindar and myself, when we were boys. Never were we so happy as when stealing away on a holiday to the hall, we ranged about the fields with honest Cæsar. He was particularly adroit in making our quail-traps and fishing rods, was always the ring-leader in all the schemes of frolicksome mischief perpetrated by the urchins of the neighbourhood, considered himself on an equality with the best of us, and many a hard battle have I had with him, about a division of the spoils of an orchard, or the title to a bird's nest. Many a summer evening do I remember when, huddled together on the steps of the hall door, Cæsar, with his stories of ghosts, goblins and witches, would put us all in a panick, and people every lane, and churchyard, and solitary wood, with imaginary beings. In process of time, he became the constant attendant and *Man Friday* of cousin Pindar, whenever he went a *sparking* among the rosy country girls of

the neighbouring farms; and brought up his rear at every rustick dance, when he would mingle in the sable group that always thronged the door of merriment, and it was enough to put to the rout a host of splenetick imps, to see his mouth gradually dilate from ear to ear, with pride and exultation, at seeing how neatly master Pindar footed it over the floor. Cæsar was likewise the chosen confidant and special agent of Pindar in all his love affairs, until, as his evil stars would have it, on being entrusted with the delivery of a poetick billetdoux, to one of his patron's sweethearts, he took an unlucky notion to send it to his own sable dulcinea, who, not being able to read it, took it to her mistress—and so the whole affair was blown; Pindar was universally roasted, and Cæsar discharged forever from his confidence.

Poor Cæsar!—he has now grown old like his young masters; but he still remembers old times, and will, now and then, remind me of them as he lights me to my room, and lingers a little while to bid me a good night——believe me, my dear Evergreen, the honest simple old creature has a warm corner in my heart—I dont see, for my part, why a body may not like a negro, as well as a white man!"

By the time these biographical anecdotes were ended, we had reached the stable, into which we involuntarily strolled, and found Cæsar busily employed in rubbing down the horses, an office he would not entrust to any body else; having contracted an affection for every beast in the stable, from their being descendants of the old race of animals, his youthful contemporaries. Cæsar was very particular in giving us their pedigrees, together with a panegyrick on

the swiftness, bottom, blood, and spirit of their sires. From these he digressed into a variety of anecdotes in which Launcelot bore a conspicuous part, and on which the old negro dwelt with all the garrulity of age. Honest Langstaff stood leaning with his arm over the back of his favourite steed, old *Killdeer*, and I could perceive he listened to Cæsar's simple details with that fond attention with which a feeling mind will hang over the narratives of boyish days. His eye sparkled with animation, a glow of youthful fire stole across his pale visage—he nodded with smiling approbation at every sentence—chuckled at every exploit—laughed heartily at the story of his once having smoked out a country singing-school with brimstone and assafœtida—and slipping a piece of money into old Cæsar's hand to buy himself a new tobacco-box, he seized me by the arm and hurried out of the stable brimfull of good nature. "'Tis a pestilent old rogue for talking, my dear fellow," cried he, "but you must not find fault with him—the creature means well." I knew at the very moment that he made this apology, honest Cæsar could not have given him half the satisfaction, had he talked like a Cicero or a Solomon.

Launcelot returned to the house with me in the best possible humour:—the whole family, who in truth love and honour him from their very souls, were delighted to see the sun-beams once more play in his countenance. Every one seemed to vie who should talk the most, tell the longest stories and be most agreeable; and Will Wizard, who had accompanied me in my visit, declared, as he lighted his cygarr, which had gone out forty times in the course of one of his oriental tales—that he had not passed so pleasant an evening since the birth-night ball of the beauteous empress of Hayti.

[The following essay was written by my friend Langstaff, in one of the paroxysms of his splenetick complaint; and, for aught I know, may have been effectual in restoring him to good humour—A mental discharge of the kind has a remarkable tendency toward sweetening the temper—and Launcelot is at this moment one of the best natured men in existence.

A. EVERGREEN.]

ON GREATNESS.

BY LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.

——Ἀχιλλεὺς ὠρτο.

THE HERO ROSE. *Pope.*

We have, more than once in the course of our work, been most jocosely familiar with great personages; and, in truth, treated them with as little ceremony, respect, and consideration, as if they had been our most particular friends. Now, we would not suffer the mortification of having our readers even suspect us of an intimacy of the kind; assuring them we are extremely choice in our intimates, and uncommonly circumspect in avoiding connexion with all doubtful characters, particularly pimps, bailiffs, lottery-brokers, chevaliers of industry, and *great men*. The world in general is pretty well aware of what is to be understood by the former classes of delinquents; but as the latter has never, I believe, been specifically defined, and as we are determined to instruct our readers

to the extent of our abilities, and their limited comprehension, it may not be amiss here, to let them know what we understand by a *great man.*

First, therefore, let us (editors and kings are always plural) premise, that there are two kinds of greatness—one conferred by *heaven*—the exalted nobility of the soul—the other, a spurious distinction engendered by the mob, and lavished upon its favourites. The former of these distinctions we have always contemplated with reverence; the latter, we will take this opportunity to strip naked before our unenlightened readers: so that if by chance any of them are held in ignominious thraldom by this base circulation of false coin, they may forthwith emancipate themselves from such inglorious delusion.

It is a fictitious value given to individuals by publick caprice, as bankers give an impression to a worthless slip of paper, thereby gaining it a currency for infinitely more than its intrinsick value. Every nation has its peculiar coin, and peculiar great men; neither of which will, for the most part, pass current out of the country where they are stamped. Your true mob-created great man, is like a note of one of the little New-England banks, and his value depreciates in proportion to the distance from home. In England, a great man is he who has most ribbonds and gew-gaws on his coat, most horses to his carriage, most slaves in his retinue, or most toad-eaters at his table; in France, he who can most dexterously flourish his heels above his head——*Duport* is most incontestably the greatest man in France, when the emperor is absent. The greatest man in China, is he who can trace his ancestry up to the moon; and in

this country our great men may generally *hunt down* their pedigree until it burrows in the dirt like a rabbit. To be concise, our great men are those who are most expert at crawling on all-fours, and have the happiest facility in dragging and winding themselves along in the dirt like very reptiles. This may seem a paradox to many of my readers, who, with great good nature be it hinted, are too stupid to look beyond the mere surface of our invaluable writings, and often pass over the knowing allusion, and poignant meaning, that is slily couching beneath. It is for the benefit of such helpless ignorants, who have no other creed but the opinion of the mob, that I shall trace, as far as it is possible to follow him in his progress from insignificance—the rise, progress, and completion of a LITTLE GREAT MAN.

In a *logocracy* (to use the sage Mustapha's phrase) it is not absolutely necessary to the formation of a great man, that he should be either wise or valiant, upright, or honourable. On the contrary, daily experience shows, that these qualities rather impede his preferment; inasmuch as they are prone to render him too inflexibly erect, and are directly at variance with that willowy *suppleness*, which enables a man to wind and twist through all the nooks and turns, and dark winding passages that lead to greatness. The grand requisite for climbing the rugged hill of popularity—the summit of which is the seat of power—is to be useful. And here once more, for the sake of our readers, who are of course not so wise as ourselves, I must explain what we understand by *usefulness*. The horse, in his native state, is wild, swift, impetuous, full of majesty, and of a most generous spirit. It

is then the animal is noble, exalted, and *useless*. But entrap him, manacle him, cudgel him, break down his lofty spirit, put the curb into his mouth, the load upon his back, and reduce him into servile obedience to the bridle and the lash, and it is then he becomes *useful*. Your jackass is one of the most *useful* animals in existence. If my readers do not now understand what I mean by usefulness, I give them all up for most absolute *nincoms*.

To rise in this country a man must first *descend*. The aspiring politician, may be compared to that indefatigable insect, called the *Tumbler;* (pronounced by a distinguished personage to be the only industrious animal in Virginia,) which buries itself in filth, and works ignobly in the dirt until it forms a little ball, which it rolls laboriously along, (like Diogenes his tub) sometimes head, sometimes tail foremost, pilfering from every rut and mud hole, and increasing its ball of greatness by the contributions of the kennel. Just so the candidate for greatness—he plunges into that mass of obscenity the *mob*, labours in dirt and oblivion, and makes unto himself the rudiments of a popular name from the admiration and praises of rogues, ignoramuses and blackguards. His name once started, onward he goes, struggling, and puffing, and pushing it before him, collecting new tributes from the dregs and offals of the land, as he proceeds, until having gathered together a mighty mass of popularity, he mounts it in triumph, is hoisted into office, and becomes a *great man*, and a ruler in the land—all this will be clearly illustrated by a sketch of a worthy of the kind, who sprung

up under my eye, and was hatched from pollution by the broad rays of popularity, which, like the sun, can "breed maggots in a dead dog."

Timothy Dabble was a young man of very promising talents—for he wrote a fair hand, and had thrice won the silver medal at a country academy—he was also an orator, for he talked with emphatick volubility, and could argue a full hour, without taking either side, or advancing a single opinion—he had still farther requisites for eloquence—for he made very handsome gestures, had dimples in his cheeks when he smiled, and enunciated most harmoniously through his nose. In short, nature had certainly marked him out for a great man; for though he was not tall, yet he added at least half an inch to his stature by elevating his head, and assumed an amazing expression of dignity by turning up his nose and curling his nostrils, in a style of conscious superiority. Convinced by these unequivocal appearances, Dabble's friends in full caucus, one and all, declared that he was undoubtedly born to be a great man, and it would be his own fault if he were not one. Dabble was tickled with an opinion which coincided so happily with his own—for vanity, in a confidential whisper, had given him the like intimation—and he reverenced the judgment of his friends, because they thought so highly of himself—accordingly he sat out with a determination to become a great man, and to start in the scrub-race for honour and renown. How to attain the desired prizes was however the question. He knew by a kind of instinctive feeling, which seems peculiar to grovelling minds, that honour, and its better part—profit, would never seek *him* out; that they would never

knock at his door and crave admittance, but must be courted, and toiled after, and *earned*. He therefore strutted forth into the highways, the market-places, and the assemblies of the people—ranted like a true cockerel orator about virtue, and patriotism, and liberty, and equality, and *himself*. Full many a political wind-mill did he battle with; and full many a time did he talk himself out of breath and his hearers out of their patience. But Dabble found to his vast astonishment, that there was not a notorious political pimp at a ward meeting but could out-talk him; and what was still more mortifying, there was not a notorious political pimp, but was more noticed and caressed than himself. The reason was simple enough, while he harrangued about *principles*, the others ranted about *men*; where he reprobated a political error, they blasted a political character—they were, consequently, the most *useful*: for the great object of our political disputes is, not who shall have the *honour* of emancipating the community from the leading-strings of delusion, but who shall have the *profit* of holding the strings, and leading the community by the nose.

Dabble was likewise very loud in his professions of integrity, incorruptibility, and disinterestedness, words which, from being filtered and refined through newspapers and election handbills, have lost their original signification, and in the political dictionary, are synonymous with empty pockets, itching palms, and interested ambition. He, in addition to all this, declared that he would support none but honest men—but unluckily as but few of these offered themselves to be supported, Dabble's services were seldom required. He pledged him-

self never to engage in party schemes or party politicks, but to stand up solely for the broad interests of his country—so he stood alone, and what is the same thing, he stood still; for, in this country, he who does not side with either party, is like a body in a *vacuum* between two planets, and must for ever remain motionless.

Dabble was immeasurably surprised that a man so honest, so disinterested, and so sagacious withal—and one too, who had the good of his country so much at heart, should thus remain unnoticed and unapplauded. A little worldly advice whispered in his ear by a shrewd old politician, at once explained the whole mystery. "He who would become great," said he, "must serve an apprenticeship to greatness, and rise by regular gradation, like the master of a vessel, who commences by being scrub and cabin-boy. He must fag in the train of great men, echo all their sentiments, become their toad-eater and parasite—laugh at all their jokes, and above all, endeavour to make *them* laugh; if you only now and then make a great man laugh your fortune is made. Look but about you, youngster, and you will not see a single little great man of the day, but has his miserable herd of retainers, who yelp at his heels, come at his whistle, worry whoever he points his finger at, and think themselves fully rewarded by sometimes snapping up a crumb that falls from the great man's table. Talk of patriotism and virtue, and incorruptibility! —tut, man!—they are the very qualities that scare munificence, and keep patronage at a distance. You might as well attempt to entice crows with red rags and gunpowder. Lay all these scarecrow virtues aside, and let this be your maxim, that a candidate for political eminence is like

a dried herring—he never becomes *luminous* until he is *corrupt*."

Dabble caught with hungry avidity these congenial doctrines, and turned into his pre-destined channel of action with the force and rapidity of a stream which has for awhile been restrained from its natural course He became what nature had fitted him to be—his tone softened down from arrogant self-sufficiency, to the whine of fawning solicitation. He mingled in the *caucuses* of the sovereign people, adapted his dress to a similitude of dirty raggedness, argued most logically with those who were of his own opinion, and slandered with all the malice of impotence, exalted characters whose orbit he despaired ever to approach —just as that scoundrel midnight thief, the owl, hoots at the blessed light of the sun, whose glorious lustre he dares never contemplate. He likewise applied himself to discharging faithfully the honourable duties of a partizan—he poached about for private slanders, and ribald anecdotes—he folded handbills—he even wrote one or two himself, which he carried about in his pocket and read to every body—he became a secretary at ward-meetings, set his hand to divers resolutions of patriotick import, and even once went so far as to make a speech, in which he proved that patriotism was a virtue—the *reigning bushaw* a great man—that this was a free country, and he himself an arrant and incontestible buzzard!

Dabble was now very frequent and devout in his visits to those temples of politicks, popularity and smoke, the ward porter-houses; those true dens of equality, where all ranks, ages, and talents, are brought down to the dead level of rude familiarity. 'Twas here his talents expanded, and his genius swel-

d up into its proper size, like the loathsome toad, which shrinking from balmy airs, and jocund sunshine, finds his congenial home in caves and dungeons, and there nourishes his venom, and bloats his deformity. 'Twas here he revelled with the swinish multitude in their debauches on patriotism and porter; and it became an even chance whether Dabble would turn out a great man, or a great drunkard. But Dabble in all this kept steadily in his eye the only deity he ever worshipped—his interest. Having by this familiarity ingratiated himself with the mob, he became wonderfully potent and industrious at elections, knew all the dens and cellars of profligacy and intemperance, brought more negroes to the polls, and knew to a greater certainty where votes could be bought for beer, than any of his contemporaries. His exertions in the cause, his persevering industry, his degrading compliance, his unresisting humility, his stedfast dependence, at length caught the attention of one of the leaders of the party, who was pleased to observe that Dabble was a very *useful* fellow, who would *go all lengths*. From that moment his fortune was made---he was hand and glove with orators and slang-whangers, basked in the sunshine of great mens' smiles, and had the honour, sundry times, of shaking hands with dignitaries, and drinking out of the same pot with them at a porter-house!!

I will not fatigue myself with tracing this caterpillar in his slimy progress from worm to butterfly: suffice it to say that Dabble bowed and bowed, and fawned, and sneaked, and smirked, and libelled, until one would have thought perseverence itself would have settled down into despair. There was no knowing how long he might have lingered at

a distance from his hopes, had he not luckily got *tarred and feathered* for some of his electioneering manœuvres---this was the making of him!---Let not my readers stare---tarring and feathering here is equal to pillory and cropped ears in England, and either of these kinds of martyrdom will ensure a *patriot* the sympathy and support of his faction. His partizans (for even he had his partizans) took his case into consideration---he had been kicked and cuffed, and disgraced, and dishonoured in the cause---he had licked the dust at the feet of the mob—he was a faithful drudge, slow to anger, of invincible patience, of incessant assiduity---a thorough going tool, who could be curbed, and spurred, and directed at pleasure;---in short he had all the important qualifications for *a little great man*, and he was accordingly ushered into office amid the acclamations of the party. The leading men complimented his usefulness, the multitude his republican simplicity, and the slang-whangers vouched for his patriotism. Since his elevation he has discovered indubitable signs of having been destined for a great man. His nose has acquired an additional elevation of several degrees, so that now he appears to have bidden adieu to this world, and to have set his thoughts altogether *on things above;* and he has swelled and inflated himself to such a degree that his friends are under apprehensions that he will one day or other explode and blow up like a *torpedo*.